THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

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May 26. About the place, playing with her baby.
May 27. Went to barter with other women at Tarongen, taking the baby with her.
May 28. Worked in the new taro garden.

The records of the girls are similar to those of the women, they search for shell-fish on the reef, or work in the taro garden, or look after some one's baby, with intervals of doing nothing in particular. The boys spend most of their time fishing, or hunting 'possum, or just playing in the bush, or they may help an older man to shape a dug-out canoe.

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RECKONING OF TIME

The past of these people is enshrined for them in their numerous myths of origin, handed down from one generation to another, and called *wasisio wa kāna*, 'stories of long ago'. They are concerned with the doings of culture heroes such as Morena, who instituted their clans, and taught them the arts of life, as described in Chapter II. Tales are also told of successful raids led by great fighting men, who are remembered by name for about two generations back, generally given with the comment: 'They used to eat man.' The era before the white man began to count as a factor in native life (some forty years ago) is sometimes referred to as 'the time of fighting'. The present is 'the time of the white man'.

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As regards anything more definite than this, it is practically impossible to obtain any real information. The idea of reckoning an interval seems completely foreign to them. When I tried to find out any such thing as how long taro takes to ripen, or how long ago a certain man died, the majority of people would merely gaze at me in puzzled silence, no matter in what form I couched my queries. My most intelligent informant once said, in discussing these matters: 'We people do not know how to count time. We think in our bellies, that's all.' They take up a plant to find how near the taro patch is to being ready for use, they hold ceremonies when they think they have enough food available. A messenger, carrying a branch of areca-nuts, is sent round to the villages that are expected to attend it, and leaves a nut at each, as an indication that it is time to start. In days of old, this signal was also used as a request to join in a fight, either in defence or attack. If they wish to make an appointment to meet at the end of a designated period, say for purposes of barter, one party to the agreement will give

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1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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Kurtatchi

put in, the seams are caulked with putty and the canoe is left for several days to allow this to harden. A stick carefully cut to a size that can just be wedged in is put across the inside to prevent warping. This stick is called *tŏkon*; it stays in its place until the putty is thoroughly dry (Pl. 50 *b*).

The next procedure is to cut and trim the four wash-boards (*watsinan*). They are carefully measured against the *mon*, and the sides of the *warin* are cut away to fit them, special attention being given to the fit at the points. The *watsinan* are then charred by holding them over the fire, as the other planks had been. A man skilled in cutting the design is then commissioned to decorate them. He first makes an outline by scratching on the blackened side with the point of a knife, then he cuts away the background of the design, exposing the white wood beneath the charred surface, which leaves the black portion uncut standing out clearly (Pl. 52). I have also seen the design burnt on with a pointed stick glowing at the end. Some of the designs are given in Fig. 26 (p. 435). They are sometimes very elaborate, though not so much nowadays as formerly. That at the bow is often more elaborate than that at the stern.

Above the *watsinan* is fixed a short plank (*tariom*), with a slightly upturned end, fitted to the curve of the *lamut*. It is cut square at the other end, and does not reach to the end of the pattern on the *watsinan*. The prow and the stern are finished off with a pointed board (*bibian*) fastened to and running up the length of the *lamut*, but cut away from the top of it at an acute angle, to terminate in a sharp point slightly longer than the end of the *lamut* (Fig. 22). This is made of the wood of the *tʃiniv*, the tree used for dug-out canoes. The *tariom* and the *bibian* are painted white by being rubbed over with the seaweed, *mŏ*. Two coats are put on in the shed, and a third after the *mon* has been for its first trip. *Tariom* and *bibian* are, as a rule, without design, but the *tariom* at the bow may, in a large canoe, carry a simple decoration.

It is said that the people of Lontis first made *mon* without any *bibian*, leaving the *lamut* bare, but a man of the Hahon people said this was not a good way, they should put the *bibian* on to strengthen it. It seems curious that a Hahon man, from the mountain district inland, should be credited with the introduction of this modification, but the same thing was told to me first at Kurtatchi, and again several months later at Tabut, so it would appear to be traditional.

The rib-frames (*mapŏ*) on which the seats will rest are fashioned